

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, WALTER REED ARMY MEDICAL CENTER
6900 Georgia Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20307-5001

TX -1 Nursing Policy

24 June 2005

Care of The Deceased and Post Mortem Procedures

1. Purpose: To outline procedures and responsibilities when a patient death occurs.

2. Scope: Applies to all nursing personnel.

3. References:

- a. WRAMC Reg 40-10, "Health Physics Regulations," Change 1, 29 August 2000.
- b. Administrative Office of the Day (AOD) Standard Operating Procedure
- c. Death Procedure Envelope, Casualty Affairs, PAD.
- d. WRAMC Reg 40-5, Autopsy, 15 November 2004.

4. Responsibilities:

Nursing personnel are responsible for notification as outlined in 5.a., preparing the body, supporting psychological needs of the family, ensuring completion of the appropriate paperwork, and coordinating transport efforts.

5. Procedures:

- a. Notification of death.
 - 1) During normal duty hours, the nursing staff will immediately notify:
 - a) Patient's physician (the MD is responsible for notifying next of kin)
 - b) Nursing Supervisor
 - c) Patient Administration Directorate (PAD): Casualty Affairs (782-6127/6128). Notify PAD within 1 hour of death occurrence.
 - d) Chaplain's office for denomination of religious preference (if requested by family)

- e) Donor Consortium (782-6462/6463)
- 2) After normal duty hours the nursing staff will call the following individuals:
 - a) On-call intern/resident
 - b) Nursing Supervisor
 - c) Administrative Officer of the Day (AOD) for assistance in administrative matters. Page the AOD when the paper work is complete and the body is ready for transport to the morgue.
 - d) Patient Administration Directorate (PAD): 782-6139/6140. Notify PAD within 1 hour of death occurrence.
 - e) On-call Chaplain for assistance
 - f) Donor Consortium (782-6462/6463)
- b. Documentation of death.
 - 1) In CIS (Progress Notes-Nursing) or Nurse's Notes (SF 510) record the time of death and whether family and/or the chaplain were present. Also indicate the disposition of the deceased's belongings, as well as the exact time the Casualty Officer or AOD were notified and their names.
 - 2) All nursing units and the ER will stock Death Procedure Envelopes. The pronouncing physician and nursing staff will follow instructions on the Death Procedures Envelope to complete the required forms listed below. Obtain replacement envelopes from Casualty Affairs or the AOD.
 - 3) Prepare a SF 523A, Disposition of the Body, in triplicate and send it to the morgue with the deceased. Upon receipt of the body, the morgue attendant will sign all copies and keep two. The original must be given to the Casualty Officer/AOD for inclusion in the patient's record.
 - 4) Stamp all forms with the patient's addressograph plate or write the following information as a minimum: name, family member prefix, SSN of sponsor, and status (i.e. active duty, retired, etc.).
 - 5) After completion of the following forms, send to Casualty Affairs, Room 3A01, or give to the AOD:
 - a) All available hard copies of the patient's inpatient, outpatient and ER records.

b) DA Form 3894, Hospital Report of Death (3 copies completed by the physician).

c) SF 523-A, Disposition of Body (3 copies).

d) DA Form 54, Record of Personal Effects outside Combat Areas.

e) SF 523 WRAMC (REV 10-75), Authorization for Autopsy (3 copies completed by the physician, as applicable).

f) SF 523BB, Authorization for Tissue Donation (3 copies completed by the physician, as applicable).

c. Preparation of the Body.

1) To prevent the transmission of disease, all individuals involved in direct contact with the deceased will wear gloves and gowns.

2) If the deceased is female, preparation will be done by female nursing personnel whenever possible.

3) If the patient has received a therapeutic dose of radioisotope contact the WRAMC Health Physics Office for further instructions in the preparation of the body. Call the 24 hour phone number at (202) 356-0058.

4) Preparation should be done as quickly as possible so that the body can be transported to the morgue within 4 hours after the time of death.

5) Leave all tubes (e.g. IV lines, endotracheal tube, nasogastric tube, Foley catheter) in place after death. Tubing may be cut short close to the insertion site and tied to prevent leakage or plugged with gauze. Casts and other forms of disposable splints and appliances should remain in place and accompany the body to the morgue.

6) Remove all rings (including wedding ring) and other jewelry from the body. If rings cannot be removed, they should be taped in place and so noted on DA Form 54 (3 copies). All personal belongings of the deceased must be listed by nursing personnel on the DA Form 54. The individuals completing the inventory of personal effects must complete #12 of DA Form 54. If a family member of the deceased is present, the patient's personal effects should be given to the family member by the nursing staff. The receiving family member must sign DA Form 54, item #13.

7) Three (3) Death Tags (DA Form 3910) must be initiated by nursing personnel and signed by the pronouncing physician. Attach the tags to the deceased as follows: one to the right great toe, one to the right wrist, and one to the outside of the body bag at the chest area.

d. Viewing of body by family members. The family/significant other should view the body prior to its removal from the ward. If viewing cannot occur within a reasonable time frame (approximately 4 hours), the body should be transported to the morgue to prevent autolysis. Alternative arrangements for viewing should be made in conjunction with the nursing supervisor.

a) After normal duty hours, by the Nursing Supervisor and AOD.

b) During normal duty hours by the Charge Nurse and pronouncing physician.

e. Transportation to the morgue.

1) During normal duty hours:

a) Call the morgue (782-6291) to notify them of the impending arrival and arrange for nursing personnel to pick up the morgue cart. If no answer, contact Department of Anatomical Pathology at 782-7743/45. To obtain the morgue cart, personnel should go to the left rear exit to the loading dock, second floor, Room 2M01.

b) Two nursing personnel will take the body to the morgue.

2) After normal duty hours:

a) Notify the AOD (782-3949 or 782-7309) when the body is ready for transport to the morgue. The AOD will bring the morgue cart to the unit.

b) Two nursing personnel must accompany the deceased to the morgue to transfer the body from the litter to the morgue holding area.

c) The AOD assumes responsibility from the Casualty Affairs Office for ensuring timely transport of the body to the morgue as well as assisting the medical staff, nursing staff, deceased patient's next of kin and/or unit chain-of-command in obtaining support services and information.

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